



PRESS RELEASE

House National Security Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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CONTACT: Maureen Cragin
Ryan Vaart
(202) 225-2539

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN FLOYD SPENCE DURING FLOOR DEBATE OF H.RES. 612, A RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT U.S. TROOPS IN THE PERSIAN GULF

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 612, which I have sponsored along with my colleague Mr. Skelton, expresses the strong support of the Congress for the courageous, patriotic, and dedicated service of our men and women in uniform serving in the Persian Gulf who are currently conducting military strikes against Iraq.

Once again, the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines of the United States Armed Forces have demonstrated that they comprise the finest military in the world. For years they have selflessly defended America's national security interests in the Persian Gulf, at great personal sacrifice. All Americans can be proud of the way our troops have performed. They are a credit to our nation and an inspiration to us all.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the situation with regard to Iraq has come to this point. For the past eight years since the end of the Gulf War, Iraq, under the leadership of Saddam Hussein, has repeatedly defied the will of the international community and ignored all resolutions of the United Nations Security Council designed to ensure that Iraq could not reconstitute its weapons of mass destruction capability.

Saddam Hussein has relentlessly pursued the acquisition of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and the ballistic missiles that can deliver them. He has invaded his neighbors, launched ballistic missiles against Saudi Arabia and Israel, and used chemical weapons against his own people. To prevent international weapons inspectors from further uncovering his prohibited weapons activities, he has obstructed inspections, refused to turn over documents, and thumbed his nose at the world. In short, he has worked methodically to undermine the international effort to prevent him from rearming.

The challenge to U.S. security posed by Saddam's actions in Iraq is stark. Simply put, the United States cannot allow Saddam to frustrate the efforts of the international community and to reconstitute his weapons capabilities. Doing so would again allow him to threaten his neighbors, U.S. friends and allies in the region, and U.S. interests.

Unfortunately, I am concerned that our military action against Iraq attacks only the symptom of the problem, rather than the problem itself. The root cause of our problems with Iraq is Saddam Hussein himself. The time is long overdue to implement a broader and more aggressive strategy that has as its ultimate goal the replacement of Saddam Hussein's dictatorial regime. The Iraqi people have suffered long enough.

Whatever one thinks of the timing of these latest U.S. military strikes against Iraq, we are all unified in support of our service men and women. We are proud of each and every one of them. I urge all my colleagues to support this resolution and urge all Americans to pray for the safety of our sons and daughters, husbands and wives who are currently in harm's way in the Gulf. It is important for them to know that the American people, and the people's representatives in Congress, support them one hundred percent.

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